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REASONS FOR UNSATISFACTORY PARTICIPATION IN THE ARMY RESERVE: A SOCIALIZATION PERSPECTIVE

by

Bob Barrios-Choplin
Aimee Kominiak
George W. Thomas

July 1999

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NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
Monterey, California 93943-5000

RADM Robert C. Chaplin
Superintendent

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Provost

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This report was prepared by:

Bob Barrios-Choplin
Research Assistant Professor
Department of Systems Management

George W. Thomas
Professor
Department of Systems Management

for Aimee Kominiak
MAJ, USA
Department of Systems Management

Reviewed by:

Reuben T. Harris
Chairman
Department of Systems Management

Released by:

David. W. Netzer, Associate Provost and
Dean of Research

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This report describes the results of interviews with 100 Army reservists who stopped participating in weekend drills. Based on socialization and psychological contract theories, respondents answered open ended questions regarding the reasons for their non-participation. Problems were described in the recruiting process, the newcomer orientation program, leadership, and communication. In spite of these reasons for leaving, 70% stated they would rejoin a unit if the causes of their quitting were removed. Recommendations are offered regarding procedures and policies which should reduce unsatisfactory participation losses in Army Reserve units.

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Abstract

This report describes the results of interviews with 100 Army reservists who stopped participating in weekend drills. Based on socialization and psychological contract theories, an interview protocol was constructed. Respondents answered open ended questions regarding the reasons and timing of their non-participation. Problems were identified in the recruiting process, the newcomer orientation program, leadership, and communication. Despite their decisions to stop participating, 70% of the respondents stated they would return to a unit if their reasons for leaving were corrected. Recommendations are offered regarding procedures and policies which should reduce unsatisfactory participation in the Army Reserve, saving significant recruiting and training resources.

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INTRODUCTION

This study is a qualitative investigation into one of the Army Reserve's most costly and urgent personnel readiness issues, unsatisfactory participation of junior enlisted reservists. This major source of attrition needs to be understood so policy makers can address specific causes of unsatisfactory participation. Other studies (see Kocher and Thomas, 1999) have detailed the demographic characteristics of unsatisfactory participants. This research focuses on the experiences of reservists during their first year in the unit to determine the reasons reservists decide to stop participating in drills. The results of 100 interviews of unsatisfactory participants point to many avenues for reducing this element of attrition, potentially increasing personnel readiness and saving the Army Reserve significant recruiting and training costs.

BACKGROUND

The end of the Cold War generated military budget constraints and downsizing that resulted in the active force having to rely increasingly on Reserve component support during operational missions. Soon after, the Gulf War required the largest Reserve activation and mobilization since WWII. These events marked the beginning of a change in the mission of the Army Reserve, and its integration into the Department of Defense (DoD) Total Force Policy. The primary objectives of the Total Force Policy are to maintain a small, active, peacetime force able to meet the National Military Strategy, and to integrate the capabilities of active and reserve forces into a more cost-effective fighting force. To meet these objectives, increasingly more combat support and combat service support capabilities have been transferred to the Reserve. Approximately 41% of the Army's support forces are currently in the Reserve ("Operation Desert Storm" 1992, 8). As evidence of their new role, the Army Times recently reported that an average of 1,800 reservists are deployed on any given day since January of 1996, and approximately 2,079 reservists are currently serving in Bosnia.

With the increased reliance on the Army Reserve, unit readiness and deployability have become vital concerns to Army leadership. A 1995 Rand Report indicated that the average Reserve unit activated for the Gulf War had a qualified personnel fill of only 63%. To be qualified to deploy, a unit must have a qualified personnel fill rate of 85%. The shortfall was due to unfilled positions (11%), and positions filled with soldiers

waiting to complete training to be duty qualified (26%) (Orvis et al., 1995, xii). These shortfalls can be attributed to a high personnel turnover rate in the Reserves, primarily due to reservists who decide to stop participating in their units for a variety of reasons. A reduction in personnel turnover would ultimately result in budget savings, as well as an overall increase in total force readiness.

The mission of the U.S. Army Reserve is to "meet Department of the Army (DA) contingency operations or mobilization requirements" (AR 140-1 1). As the draw down of the Total Force continues and the potential for regional conflicts requiring the short notice deployment of large numbers of soldiers increases, the Army will have to rely increasingly on the Reserve to fill/augment force and mission requirement gaps. Currently, the Reserve is the Army's primary source of combat support (CS) and combat service support (CSS) assets. According to one Rand Report, the Reserve Component will constitute 39 percent of the nation's defense force in fiscal year 1999 ("Trends" 2). The issue of Reserve readiness, then, is critical to our national military strategy, and is of great concern to congressional policy makers.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF RESERVISTS

Recruiting starts the joining process for a potential recruit, and retention "is the cornerstone of personnel readiness" (RFPB 41). This section addresses the processes and policies of recruiting and retaining a new reservist in order to lay the foundation to examine potential causes of personnel turnover. It also identifies recruiting agencies, and the specific responsibilities of recruiters and key unit members to integrate the new reservist into the unit.

Recruiting Organizations/Process

Unlike the Active Army, which only accesses soldiers through the United States Army Recruiting Command (USAREC), the Reserve Component has three organizations responsible for Reserve accessions. These agencies include USAREC, Department of the Army Personnel Command (PERSCOM), and the Army Reserve Personnel Command (ARPERCOM). USAREC, the only organization in which recruiters access active and reserve soldiers, accounts for the majority of all reserve accessions. PERSCOM's role in the process is to use in-service recruiters located at transition points to encourage soldiers leaving the active Army to join the Reserve. ARPERCOM manages the IRR database and also recruits reservists for the Selected Reserve by screening the IRR database for members eligible to fill unit shortages.

The role of the recruiter in these organizations, located in offices throughout the country and overseas, is to be a uniformed representative of the Army and to positively and

accurately portray military life ("Military Recruiting, 1994, 13). Recruiters canvass prospective recruits through means such as making presentations at local high schools, advertising at community events, and contacting individuals directly. Additionally, the Army Reserve is advertising and recruiting through a website on the Internet, which allows interested individuals to contact recruiters in their areas.

After individuals have decided to enlist, the recruiter registers them for processing at the Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS). Processing at the MEPS for the recruits includes taking a standardized test (the Armed Services Vocational Battery /Armed Forces Qualification Test), which measures a soldier's quality and trainability, and taking a medical exam ("Military Recruiting," 1994, 12). Finally, the recruits choose or are assigned a MOS based on their test scores and medical qualifications. After the recruit has a MOS, an Army representative produces a contract for either the Delayed Entry Program (DEP) or immediate reserve or active duty. The DEP primarily allows enlistees to resolve scheduling complications and allows recruiters to coordinate allocations for initial entry training (Mitchell, 1994, 22).

Recruiting is a proactive program designed to enlist the most qualified soldiers into the Reserve and Active Components. Recruiters and other service representatives in the recruiting process form an enlistee's first impressions and expectations of the Army Reserve. The recruiting process, however, is only the first step in the retention process.

Retention Process

Retention can be defined as "the sum of leadership actions that create a positive training environment and influence soldiers to continue serving in the USAR, while enhancing units' personnel readiness" (USARC 140-6, 1997, 3). An effective retention program, therefore, is critical to personnel readiness. The retention process begins with the assignment of new reservists from one of the accessioning agencies, and continues throughout the career of the soldier. U.S. Army Reserve Command (USARC) recognizes that reservists' anxieties can be reduced through the proper integration of a soldier into a unit, and research demonstrates that first impressions of a unit impact a reservist's decision to continue to participate (USARC 140-6, 1997, 6). Designated individuals in the unit have responsibilities, outlined in USARC Regulation 140-6, to ensure a new reservist is properly integrated into the unit. The majority of these responsibilities are included in the sponsorship program. The sponsorship program requires 100% sponsorship of all new reservists, and events are documented on a sponsorship checklist (USARC Form 62-R; Sponsor's Guide and In processing Checklist), which must be completed and placed in unit files. The recruiter and the unit interface when the recruiter escorts the enlistee to the unit and is documented on the sponsorship checklist.

Whereas the recruiter is one of the first military members the new reservist encounters, the unit Full Time Support (FTS) personnel, or unit administrators are usually the first members in the unit a reservist meets. The unit administrator's responsibilities start before the member arrives at the unit. He should have made prior contact with the soldier,

provided a welcome letter/packet, and coordinated with the First Sergeant for a sponsor. According to USARC Regulation 140-6, the member's first meeting with the unit administrator gives the soldier a "feeling of what to expect in the unit" (USARC 140-6, 1997, 7). The unit administrator welcomes the soldier, administratively in-processes the soldier, gives the soldier the name and phone number of the sponsor, and answers any immediate questions the soldier may have

The sponsorship program is a commander's program. The commander has individual requirements, as well as responsibility for the administration of the overall program in the unit. The unit commander is responsible not only for personally welcoming the soldier during the first drill, but also for conducting an interview with the soldier that includes informing him of the mission/organization of the unit and determining the soldier's goals and expectations of the Reserve. Additionally, the unit commander must ensure that soldiers understand service obligations and participation requirements. The soldier must sign a certificate (Certificate of Acknowledgment of Service Requirements for Individuals Enlisting, Re-enlisting, or Transferring to Troop Program Units of the U.S. Army Reserve), to acknowledge receipt of the orientation (AR135-91, 1994, 11). Finally, the commander should questions the soldier to determine the effectiveness of the unit sponsorship program.

The First Sergeant/Senior Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) of the unit also plays an important role in the integration of the new soldier. He selects quality soldiers familiar with the unit to serve as sponsors, and trains the sponsors using the plan in USARC Pam 140-1. He, too, conducts a personal interview with the soldier in which he explains contract

requirements, benefit and incentive plans such as the Montgomery GI Bill (education assistance), and unit standards and training requirements.

First line supervisors also have many responsibilities that impact a new soldier's first impressions of the unit. These responsibilities include contacting the soldier prior to the first drill to welcome the soldier to the unit, notifying the soldier of the drill schedule, and ensuring the soldier has no problems such as a lack of transportation that would prevent him from attending drill. Additionally, during the first drill, the first line supervisor's responsibilities include explaining the soldier's role in the section, introducing the soldier to coworkers, and explaining to the soldier what he should expect during initial entry training. The supervisor should also ensure the soldier completes in-processing.

Although the first line supervisor has a long-term relationship with the soldier, it is the sponsor who influences a soldier's short-term expectations of the unit. Sponsor responsibilities include contacting the soldier before the first drill to inform the soldier of what to expect at the first drill, and providing the soldier a home phone number in case he has any questions. During the first drill the sponsor escorts the soldier throughout in-processing and shows the soldier around the unit. The sponsor also introduces the soldier to coworkers.

The responsibilities of key unit personnel in the sponsorship program are outlined in USARC Regulation 140-6, and require documentation on the sponsorship checklist. The redundancies designed into the sponsorship program underscore the USARC's

commitment to ensuring new soldiers form good first impressions and are properly integrated into the unit.

PARTICIPATION IN THE SELECT RESERVE

Unsatisfactory Participation

A soldier is declared an unsatisfactory participant when he incurs nine unexcused absences from unit training assemblies within a one year period, or fails to attend or complete annual training (AR 135-91, 1994, 12). Failure to attend or complete AT can result in a soldier's prosecution under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. For unexcused absences, however, the unit commander initiates action against the soldier by selecting one of two options: 1) If the unit commander determines the soldier has the potential for useful service, the soldier will be transferred to the IRR; 2) If the soldier has no potential for useful service, the soldier will be discharged from the Reserve. In addition, the unit commander has the option to reduce the soldier's rank under either option.

Costs of Unsatisfactory Participation

Unsatisfactory participation directly impacts limited budget dollars as well as total force readiness. Currently, the costs associated with recruiting and training a non-prior service soldier are $19,432 to recruit, and $41,568 to train for a total of $60,000 per non-prior service soldier (USARC, 1997). In contrast, recruiting and retraining prior service soldiers costs $6,700 per soldier. In either case, the costs of nonparticipation quickly consume limited budget dollars. Despite force reductions, enlisted loss rates remain high. Losses result in increases in recruiting and training costs as vacant positions must be filled

with qualified soldiers. More importantly, assigned strength and duty MOS qualified shortfalls degrade unit readiness. This is significant, as many vital support assets are located in the Reserve. Determining the causes of unsatisfactory participation and implementing programs and procedures to reduce turnover will ultimately result in significant budget savings and an increase in total force readiness.

LITERATURE REVIEW

To better understand the issue of unsatisfactory participation, it is useful to review relevant theoretical research to establish a framework from which to investigate the problem. Several different organizational management theories are examined to establish this framework for analysis. This section begins with a discussion of the theories of psychological contracts, unmet expectations, and stages of socialization. Finally, an integrated model is introduced which will shape the design of the study of unsatisfactory participation. The model integrates psychological contracts and met expectation theory, realistic job preview research, and stages of socialization into a specific framework which will be used to understand the process of turnover in the Army Reserve.

Psychological Contracts and Met Expectation Theory

Just as an individual engaged in an exchange process has preconceived expectations of a fair exchange, a newcomer has expectations of fair exchange when joining an organization. These expectations can be thought of as a psychological contract between the newcomer and the organization. The psychological contract is continuously revised over time as a newcomer's expectations approach reality. When a newcomer and/or an organization cannot resolve unmet expectations, the newcomer may "break" the contract, and leave the organization. Understanding the role of the psychological contract, and the results of unmet expectations as they apply to the joining process may help managers prevent

turnover.

Kotter defines the psychological contract as "an implicit contract between an individual and his organization which specifies what each expects to give and receive from each other in their relationship," (Kotter, 1973, 92). The newcomer may expect to receive a certain salary, advancement opportunities, challenging work, etc. In return, he expects to give his time, technical skills, commitment, etc. Rousseau further develops the concept, and defines the psychological contract as an "individual's beliefs in a reciprocal obligation between the individual and the organization," and that the organization only provides the context for the creation of the contract (Rousseau, 1989, 121). The psychological contract is based completely on the newcomer's expectations about an organization's obligations, and if not discussed, may be unknown to the organization.

Factors that influence the formation of psychological contracts may be explicit or implied (Rousseau, 1989, 124). For example, an organization may explicitly promise a certain salary, and the newcomer will expect to receive the salary promised. Similarly an organization may be known for the excellent pay for its employees. Although just implied, the newcomer may expect to be paid well for his contributions.

Problems occur when a newcomer's expectations of the organization are unrealistic. To the newcomer, unmet expectations equate to the failure of the organization to fulfill its obligations, and a violation of the psychological contract. In their concept of met expectation theory, Porter and Steers hypothesized that if a newcomer encounters more unmet

expectations than met expectations, the newcomer will become dissatisfied. Unlike the dissatisfaction resulting from unfair exchanges identified in equity theory, a violation of the psychological contract is a violation of trust a newcomer perceived to have been established with the organization (Rousseau, 1989, 127). The degree of the dissatisfaction resulting from unmet expectations and broken trust is likely to result in the newcomer leaving the organization. Research by Wanous, Poland, Premack, and Davis confirms that met expectations positively correlate with job satisfaction and lower turnover (Wanous et. al, 1992, 288).

Realistic Job Previews

The realistic job preview (RJP) is one method employed to bring a newcomer's expectations into congruence with organizational reality. The realistic job preview is an organizational strategy used to increase the amount and accuracy of information a newcomer receives about an organization to encourage him develop more realistic expectations (Wanous, 1977, 601). Traditional job previews, in contrast, portray the organization as favorably as possible to attract the most qualified applicants. Recruiting literature, for example, may depict the organization as an exciting place to work. These traditional job previews can foster the development of unrealistic expectations, and may result in unmet expectations, violation of a psychological contract, and turnover. Realistic job previews give applicants a "vaccination" to deflate newcomer expectations and provide a "small dose of organizational reality" (Jablin, 1987, 688). Providing a more realistic preview of the job and the organization may increase the number of met expectations, which may translate into

increased job satisfaction.

Stages of Socialization

Joining an organization entails a developmental process often termed socialization. Jablin proposes four stages of socialization: anticipatory socialization; organizational encounter; metamorphosis; and exit. These stages are characterized by the communication processes, which occur in each phase of development (Jablin, 1987, 679). In the anticipatory stage, newcomers initially gather information about a job and an organization through sources such as family, friends, and the media. This process, defined by Jablin as vocational organizational communications socialization (VOCS), may provide the foundation for a newcomer's formation of first impressions and expectations about an organization. During the anticipatory socialization phase, newcomers continue to acquire information from organizational recruiters, other applicants, current employees, etc. These sources may or may not provide an accurate job preview for the newcomer, and may result in a newcomer developing distorted expectations. These distorted expectations may ultimately make the assimilation process more difficult for the newcomer (Jablin, 1987, 693).

In the encounter phase, the newcomer learns his role, and organizational norms and expectations from his supervisor and coworkers. It is in this phase that the newcomer may experience surprise (Louis, 1980), or unmet expectations, which may prove difficult for a newcomer with inflated expectations (Jablin, 1987, 695).

The metamorphosis phase marks the newcomer's alignment of expectations to those

of the organization. In this phase the newcomer desires to be identified with the organization, and has internalized organizational values and behaviors. Whereas the newcomer only received information in previous phases, the newcomer now provides input and feedback to supervisors and coworkers in the organization.

Jablin identifies his final stage of socialization as the exit from the organization. Little research exists identifying the communication factors, which contribute to an individual leaving an organization. Reasons individuals leave organizations may include personal issues, issues that may relate to some aspect of the organization, or both. He notes, however, that research in this area is necessary in order to recognize and remedy communication dissatisfaction before it results in turnover (Jablin, 1987, 724).

Integrated Model

Combining the concepts of the Stages of Socialization and psychological contracts results in an integrated conceptual model (figure 1). This integrated model will be applied to the context of the Army Reserve, and will be used to study turnover and the problem of unsatisfactory participation.

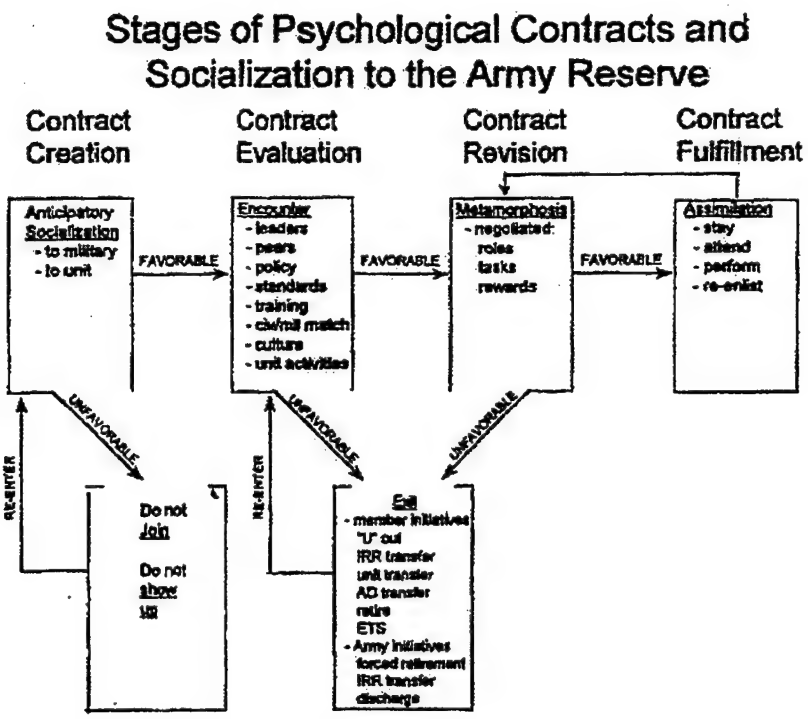

Figure 1. Integrated model as a adapted from Jablin and Barrios-Choplin

The integrated model consists of Jablin's four stages. Each stage incorporates a phase of psychological contract development, and sources of information which contribute to the formation of newcomer expectations. In this formulation, the exit option occurs in the last three stages of socialization, as the newcomer to the Army Reserve may exit at any time, and may also re-enter the process.

Applying the Army Reserve context to the stage of anticipatory socialization, the individual forms his initial expectations through interactions with recruiters, other applicants, and possibly peers who are members of the Reserve. After an individual is determined to be eligible to join the Reserve, a recruiter provides the individual information about the

military, the Reserve, and the jobs available. Individuals whose initial expectations are not met (a particular job is not available, for example), simply do not join, or may decide to join at a later date. Those individuals who perceive the information from the recruiter to be positive (meeting initial expectations formed through Jablin's VOCS, receiving a RJP, etc.), decide to join the Reserve. The recruiter may have told the recruit that he could have a particular job, or the recruit may have only perceived that the recruiter promised him a particular job. Regardless, the recruit creates a psychological contract of expectations based on the perceived agreements with the recruiter. Between the time the recruit joins and the time he reports to the unit, he continues to seek and process information, which contributes to his expectations and psychological contract.

In the encounter stage, the recruit reports to his assigned unit. He begins to evaluate the psychological contract based on interactions with leaders and coworkers, and policies, standards, training, etc. In this stage, the new reservist may experience surprise (unmet expectations) if reality is not correctly anticipated. As Jablin and Wanous noted, the more inflated the expectations, the more difficult this stage will be for the new reservist. If the new reservist cannot adjust his expectations to the realities of the unit, he may feel his psychological contract has been violated, experience extreme dissatisfaction, and finally, leave the organization. His dissatisfaction may be manifested through missing drills and being transferred out for unsatisfactory performance, failing to re-enlist, retiring, etc. Additionally, if his performance suffers as a result of his dissatisfaction, the Army may take initiatives, such as a discharge or forced transfer to inactive status. A feedback loop indicates

that the new reservist, if eligible, may re-enter the process. However, if the new reservist's psychological contract is met, he or she can adjust expectations to the reality of the unit, thus moving into the metamorphosis stage.

In the metamorphosis stage, the new reservist seeks to be accepted as a member of the unit. This requires contract revision as he adjusts his expectations to those which reflect the attitudes and behaviors expected from members of the unit. As he further develops his role in the unit, he forms new expectations. For example, based on observations of others, he may perceive he should receive a reward (a medal) for tasks he has successfully performed over time. If the revised psychological contract of this new expectation is not met, the new reservist may decide to exit the unit. Again, if eligible, the new reservist may re-enter the process in the entry and encounter stage. The revision process is cyclical, and the new reservist is continually updating and evaluating his psychological contract.

Finally, the reservist is fully accepted into the unit. His revised psychological contract has been fulfilled. He has internalized the expected behaviors and attitudes of the unit, and the unit has accepted him as a member. Through the contract revision process, he has been able to adjust his expectations to match reality. He also experiences job satisfaction, which may be manifested through good job performance, or his decision to re-enlist.

The exit stage ideally comes after 20 or more years of service in the form of retirement. Alternately, it can come after six years, as an enlistment contract expires and is

not renewed. In the worst case, it can come in the anticipatory socialization phase, as some enlistees never show up at the unit.

The integrated conceptual model represents the socialization process and the psychological contract as they apply to the Army Reserve. The model, as well as the theories studied to develop the model, guides this research of the problem of unsatisfactory participation.

METHODOLOGY

This section details the design of the study, which is based on the integrated conceptual model developed from relevant organizational management theories introduced in the previous section. The model is designed specifically to increase understanding of the process by which a new reservist enters and is assimilated into an Army Reserve unit and the circumstances under which a reservist becomes an unsatisfactory participant. Understanding why reservists leave the military may enable Army leadership to identify policies and procedures to reduce currently unacceptable high turnover rates.

Design of the Study

The research method chosen was a telephonic interview consisting of qualitative, open-ended questions which allowed opportunities to expand or probe responses. The target respondents were Army Reservists who had stopped attending drills within the past two years.

Interview Protocol

Previous research on the subject of turnover and nonparticipation has focused on archival data, or used large samples for a quantitative approach to the problem. A review of existing research revealed that no one has collected large amounts of data from interviews with unsatisfactory participants. The interview protocol was based on the stages of socialization and psychological contracts, and allowed for probing and capturing detailed

answers from the respondents (appendix 1).

Sampling Procedure

The sampling frame was a subset of the population of unsatisfactory participants chosen from a list provided by the USAR. A table of random numbers was used to generate the sample. The first random number selected was seven. The seventh person, and every subsequent seventh person on the two lists was called.

Approximately every second person called generated the need to recall. If the call resulted in a number which was no longer in service, or in contacting a person unrelated to the subject, the name was crossed off the list. Approximately ten calls were required to generate each usable interview.

Limitations of the Methodology

The sample of 100 respondents is relatively small compared to the population of unsatisfactory participants. Also, as with any research method which involves interview protocols, both the questions and resulting data are subject to both the skill and interpretation of the researcher. Furthermore, the respondents in the sample who have failed to fulfill Reserve contract obligations may have attribution biases which place blame for their behavior on the institution or others rather than on themselves. Finally, the respondents might have given answers to please the interviewer, showing a social desirability bias.

STUDY RESULTS

Introduction

This section presents the results of the analysis of the unsatisfactory participant sample. The integrated model provides the framework with which to organize the results. The subsections therefore include anticipatory socialization, encounter, metamorphosis, and exit. The subsidiary research questions, also organized using the integrated model, are addressed in the corresponding stage of the model. It should be noted that not all of the responses will sum to 100 due to missing data.

Anticipatory Socialization

The anticipatory socialization stage of the model is characterized by the reservist receiving information from sources which form the newcomer's first impressions and expectations of the Reserve. Jablin identifies the process by which individuals receive information prior to making first contact with anyone in an organization as vocational organizational communications (VOCS). Sources of information which contribute to VOCS include the media, promotional literature, family, friends, etc. All of these sources of information contribute to the creation of the reservist's psychological contract, or expectations of the Reserve. The research questions in this stage explore the sources of information about the Reserve and the unit, and examine the role the recruiter plays in socializing the reservist.

1. **What are the sources of information about the Army Reserve Program, and are they accurate?**

As illustrated in Figure 2, 22% of the respondents reported they received information from in-serve recruiters (ISRs), and 41% reported they received information from local recruiters. Additionally, 20% of reservists received their information from either friends or relatives.

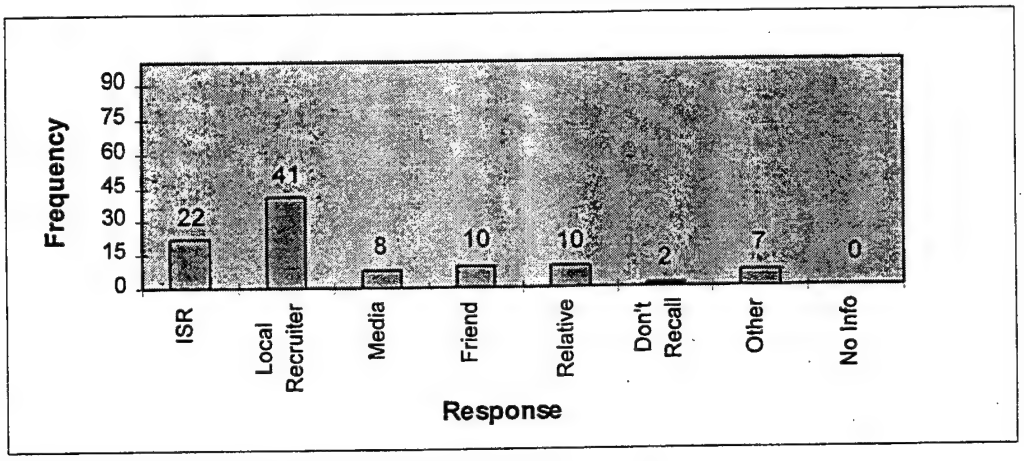

Figure 2. Sources of information about the Reserve Program

Figure 3 portrays that 47% and 21% reported that their source of information was accurate and somewhat accurate, while 21% reported their source as inaccurate. One reservist who reported he received inaccurate information responded, "I was told I would get an enlistment bonus, but never got it."

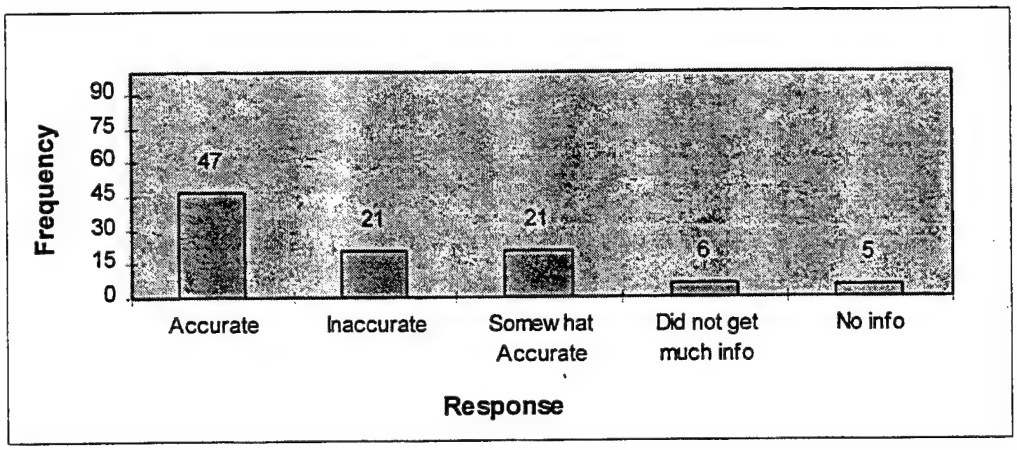

Figure 3. Accuracy of source of information about the Reserve Program

A cross tabulation of the 'sources of information' and the 'accuracy of information' in Figure 4 revealed that 13 out of 22 (59%) reservists whose source was an in-service recruiter received accurate information, 4 of the 22 received somewhat accurate information, and 4 of the 22 received inaccurate information. Most notably, while 19 of 41 (46%), and 7 of 41 (17%) of reservists whose source was a recruiter received accurate and somewhat accurate information, 13 of 41 (32%) received inaccurate information. Of the 20% who received information from family and friends, all reported the information was accurate, or somewhat accurate.

Source / Accuracy	ISR	Recruiter	Media	Friend	Family	Don't Recall	Other	No Prior Knowledge	Total
Yes	13	19	2	8	3	0	2	0	**47**
No	4	13	3	0	0	0	1	0	**21**
Somewhat	4	7	2	2	4	0	2	0	**21**
Didn't get much info	1	2	1	0	2	0	0	0	**6**
Info. missing	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	1	**5**
Total	**22**	**41**	**8**	**10**	**10**	**2**	**6**	**1**	**100**

Figure 4. Cross tabulation of source and accuracy

2. What are the sources of information about the Reserve unit, and are they accurate?

As depicted in Figure 5, the majority of reservists learned about their Reserve unit from a local recruiter (39%), whereas only 3% learned about their unit from an in-service recruiter. In contrast to the high number who learned about the Reserve program from a friend or relative, only 9% learned about their unit from these sources. A significant number of reservists (28%) received no prior information about their unit from any source.

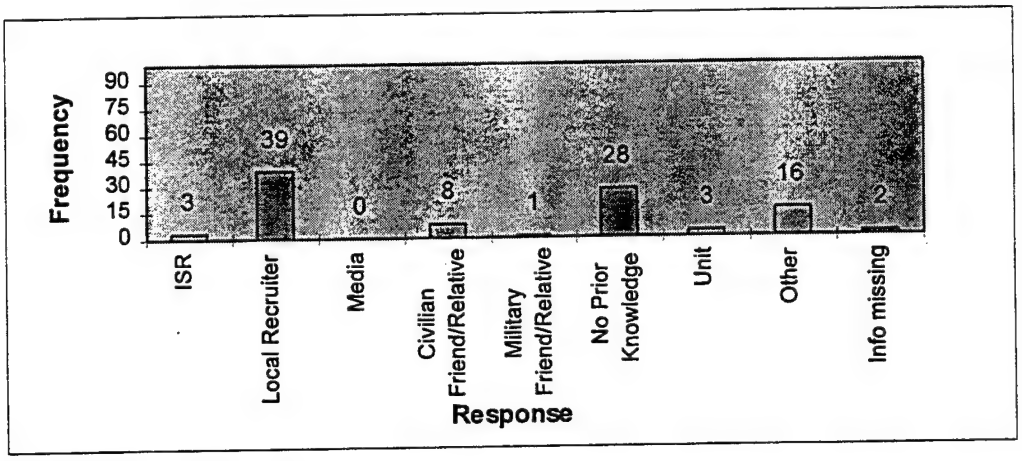

Figure 5. Sources of information about the Reserve unit

Figure 6 illustrates that 41% of reservists reported sources of information about their units were accurate, or somewhat accurate, while 9% reported their sources were inaccurate.

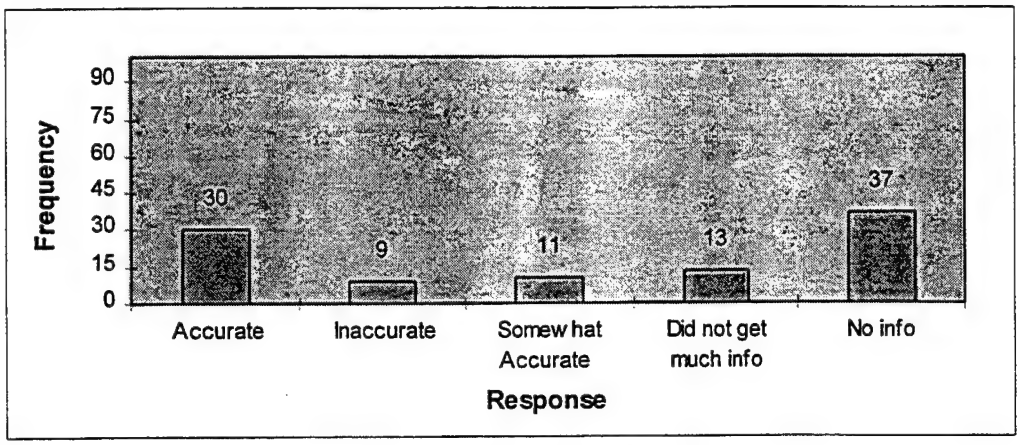

Figure 6. Accuracy of source about the Reserve unit

A cross tabulation of the 'source of information about a unit' and the 'accuracy of the source' in Figure 7 illustrates that 20 of 39 (51%) reported that the recruiter gave them accurate, or somewhat accurate, information as opposed to 6 of 39 (15%) who reported receiving inaccurate information from a recruiter.

Source / Accuracy	ISR	Recruiter	Media	Civ.friend/relative	Mil. friend/relative	Don't Recall	Unit	Other	Info missing	Total
Yes	3	13	0	4	1	0	2	7	0	**30**
No	0	6	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	**9**
Somewhat	0	7	0	1	0	0	1	2	0	**11**
Didn't get much info	0	8	0	0	0	1	0	4	0	**13**
Info missing	0	5	0	0	0	27	0	3	2	**37**
Total	**3**	**39**	**0**	**8**	**1**	**28**	**3**	**16**	**2**	**100**

Figure 7. Cross tabulation of source of information about the unit and the accuracy of the source

3. What is the role of the recruiter in anticipatory socialization?

Two questions from the interview protocol were used to determine the role of the recruiter in the anticipatory socialization phase:

4a. Did the recruiter take you to the unit? .

Of the 77 reservists who were accessed by a recruiter, 61% (47 of 77) were escorted by a recruiter to their new units, and 38% (29 of 77) were not. One prior service reservist reported, " I went down to the unit on my own."

4b. Did the recruiter tell you about the unit's mission?

Only 28 of 77 (36%) reported that the recruiter explained the mission of the unit to them, while 40 of 77 (52%) reported the recruiter did not.

A cross tabulation of these variables reveals that 31% (24 of 77) of the recruiters explained the mission to reservists and escorted them to their units, while 29% (22 of 77) did neither.

Tell Mission / Take to Unit	Yes	No	Somewhat	Don't Recall	N/A/ Info missing	Total
Yes	24	4	0	0	0	**28**
No	18	22	0	0	0	**40**
Somewhat	3	3	0	0	0	**6**
Don't Recall	2	0	0	1	0	**3**
Info missing	0	0	0	0	23	**23**
Total	**47**	**29**	**0**	**1**	**23**	**100**

Figure 8. Cross tabulation of the variables 'did the recruiter tell you the mission of the unit' and 'did the recruiter take you to the unit'

C. ENCOUNTER

The encounter stage of the model begins when the reservist reports to his unit for the first time, and continues through the first training weekend. If the reservist's experiences in the unit do not meet his expectations, he may experience surprise (unmet expectations). During the anticipatory socialization stage, the reservist creates his psychological contract from his interactions with a recruiter, other applicants, etc. In the encounter stage, the

reservist evaluates his contract against those expectations for the first time.

1. How well does the unit begin to integrate the reservist in the encounter stage?

Response frequencies conducted on specific questions indicate how well the unit integrated the reservist. Questions on the interview protocol that address integration of the reservist include:

6. On your first training weekend:

a. Was the unit expecting you?

Of the 100 respondents, 69% of the reservists indicated the unit was expecting them, and 18% indicated the unit was not.

b. Did you get an orientation brief?

Although 60% reported they received an orientation brief, 30% reported they did not receive one.

c. Did the commander talk to newcomers?

The commander of the unit spoke to 62% of the new reservists, but did not speak to 28%.

d. Did the unit appoint a sponsor to help you?

Sponsors were assigned to 58% of the reservists, however, 32% did not receive one.

d(1). Did the sponsor do a good job?

Of the 58 reservists who received sponsors, 52% (30 of 58) reported the sponsor did a good job in-processing and assisting them, 16% reported the sponsor did a somewhat good job, while 22% (13 of 58) reported the sponsor did not do a good job.

e. Did you get in-processed?

Finally, 71% of the reservists were in-processed within the first two drill weekends they attended, and only 4% were never fully in-processed. A small number of reservists (8%) indicated that although they were in-processed before they exited the unit, the process took more than two drill weekends to complete. One reservist who did not receive uniforms when he was in-processed reported, "I couldn't go to formations because I didn't have uniforms."

Cross tabulations of these questions provide more detailed information about the quality of a unit's integration plan. As depicted in Figure 9, only 50% of the reservists reported that both the commander talked to them and that they received an orientation brief, while 18% reported that they received neither. Eleven percent of reservists talked to the commander, but did not receive an orientation brief, and 9% received an orientation brief, but did not talk to the commander.

Orientation Brief / Commander Talk	Yes	No	Don't Recall	Don't Know	N/A/ Info missing	Total
Yes	50	11	1	0	0	**62**
No	9	18	1	0	0	**28**
Don't Recall	0	1	0	0	0	**1**
Don't Know	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Someone else did	1	0	0	0	0	**1**
N/A/Info missing	0	0	0	0	8	**8**
Total	**60**	**30**	**2**	**0**	**8**	**100**

Figure 9. Cross tabulation of the variables 'did you receive an orientation brief' and 'did the commander talk to newcomers'

The cross tabulation in Figure 10 illustrates that of the 69 reservists that reported the unit was expecting them, 45 of those reservists (65%) received a sponsor. Although the unit expected the arrival of 22% of reservists, none were assigned sponsors.

Sponsor / Unit Expecting	Yes	No	Don't Recall	Don't Know	N/A/ Info missing	Total
Yes	45	22	1	0	1	**69**
No	9	9	0	0	0	**18**
Don't Recall	1	0	0	0	0	**1**
Don't Know	3	1	0	0	0	**4**
N/A/Info missing	0	0	0	0	8	**8**
Total	**58**	**32**	**1**	**0**	**9**	**100**

Figure 10. Cross tabulation of the variables 'unit expecting' and 'sponsor'

Finally, of the 58 reservists who received a sponsor, only 50% (29 of 58) thought the sponsor did a good job, while 22% (13 of 58) thought the sponsor did a poor job. One reservist who did not receive a sponsor reported that he "didn't feel like part of the unit."

2. What is the nature of met and unmet expectations during the encounter stage, and do unmet expectations relate to the reasons for exiting during this stage?

To characterize the nature of met and unmet expectations in a specific stage, cross tabulations of certain variables were conducted to identify what met and unmet expectations occurred in each stage. Response frequencies of these questions provided information about the reservists' met and unmet expectations. The questions from the interview protocol which address met and unmet expectations and can be identified as occurring in a particular stage include:

7b(1). If something was better than you expected, what was better?

As shown in Figure 11, almost half (49%) of the respondents reported that they experienced something that was better than they expected. Of those 49 reservists, 25 noticed that

something was better during the encounter stage. Forty-four percent (11 of 25) noticed the people in the unit were friendlier than they expected. Less significantly, 16% (4 of 25) reported that the leadership was better than they expected, and 12% (3 of 25) reported that other benefits and opportunities (promotion, increased responsibility, etc.) were better. Only one reservist reported that nothing was better than what he expected. One reservist reported that the officers in his chain of command, "treated me like a human being instead of a rank."

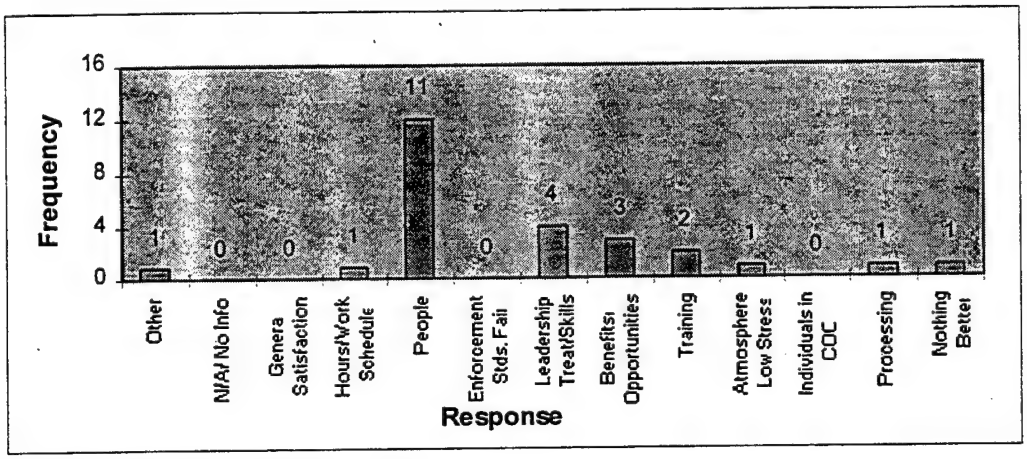

Figure 11. Frequency of 'what was better than expected' for reservists during the encounter stage.

c(1) If something was worse than what you expected, what was worse?

Ninety-two respondents reported that something was worse than they expected. As illustrated in Figure 12, 42 noticed something was worse than expected during the first drill. When asked what was worse, 29% (12 of 42) answered leadership and 21% (9 of 42) answered training. As one reservist reported, "all we did was sit there and read the paper all day—we didn't accomplish anything." Ten percent (4 of 42) reservists responded that in-processing was slow/inefficient, and another 10% answered that unit enforcement standards were too low.

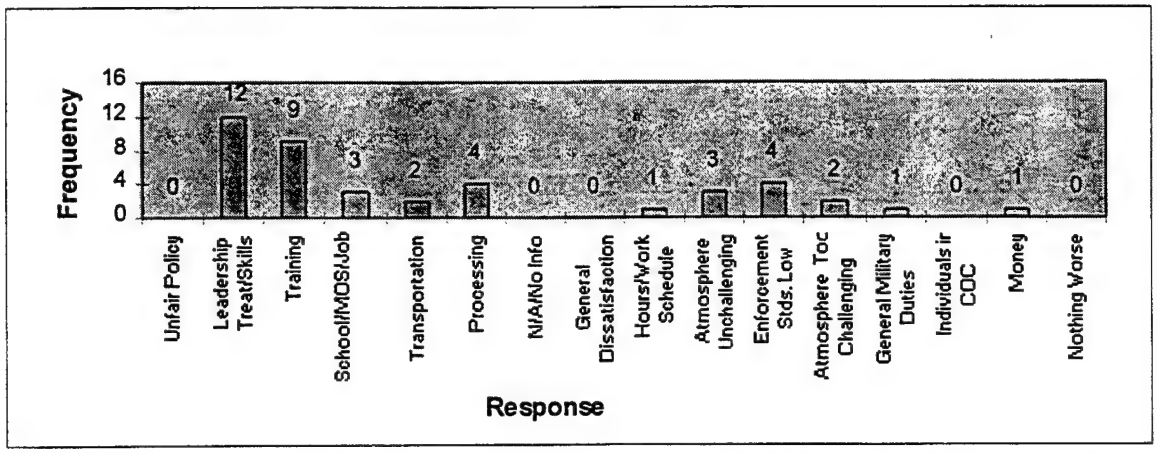

Figure 12. Frequency of 'what was worse than expected' during the encounter stage

9a. What was your main reason for stopping?

As illustrated in Figure 13, 11 reservists exited during the encounter stage. Of the 11 reservists, 36% (4 of 11) stopped participating because of the lack of meaningful training. One reservist reported that the unit did not seem to have a training plan, and as a result, "time was slow and monotonous at drill." Two exited due to poor leadership treatment/skills. Another reservist reported that instead of being officially notified of his promotion by someone in the chain of command, "I found out I was promoted on my LES (Leave and Earnings Statement)." Finally, two reservists exited because of transportation problems.

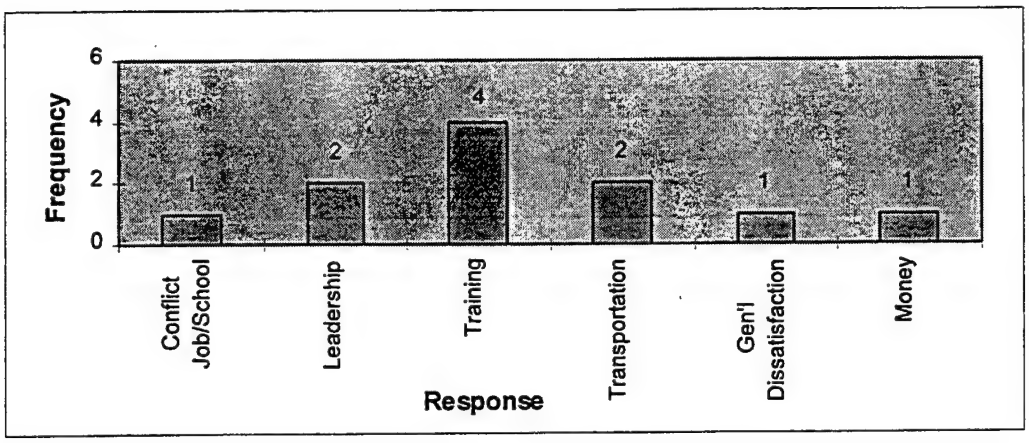

Figure 13. Frequency of 'why did you stop exit/stop participating' during the encounter stage

A cross tabulation of the variables 'what was worse than you expected' and 'why did you stop participating' provides information as to whether unmet expectations relate to reasons reservists exit during the encounter stage. As illustrated in Figure 14, 2 of the 11 reservists who exited during the encounter stage noted that training was worse than they expected, and then identified training as the reason they exited the unit. Similarly, 1 of the 11 reservists noted that leadership was worse than he expected, and also identified leadership as the reason he exited the unit. Two reservists reported that the atmosphere was unchallenging, with one exiting because of leadership and the other exiting due to training.

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expected, and then identified training as the reason they exited the unit. Similarly, 1 of the 11 reservists noted that leadership was worse than he expected, and also identified leadership as the reason he exited the unit. Two reservists reported that the atmosphere was not challenging, with one exiting because of leadership and the other exiting due to training.

What Worse / Why Stop	Leadership	Training	Atmosphere Unchallenging	Enforcement Stds Too Low	Atmosphere Too Challenging	Total
Conflict Job/School	1	0	0	0	0	1
Leadership	1	0	1	0	0	2
Training	1	2	1	0	0	4
Transportation	0	1	0	0	1	2
Gen'l Dissatisfaction	0	0	0	1	0	1
Money Problems	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**	**1**	**11**

Figure 14. Cross tabulation of the variables ' what was worse than you expected' and 'why did you exit/stop participating'

3. What attempts did reservists who left during the encounter stage make to remedy dissatisfaction, and what actions did leadership take to resolve problems?

Of the 100 respondents, 11 left before the second drill. A cross tabulation of the variables 'when did you stop' and 'did you talk to the chain of command about your dissatisfaction' revealed that 64% (7 of 11) talked to someone about their dissatisfaction, while the other 4 reservists did not. Figure 15 identifies who in the chain of command the reservist talked to about his dissatisfaction. Of the 7 reservists who left in the encounter stage and talked to someone, 3 (43%) spoke to the first sergeant (1SG), followed by 2 (29%) who spoke to either the unit administrator or unit administrative personnel.

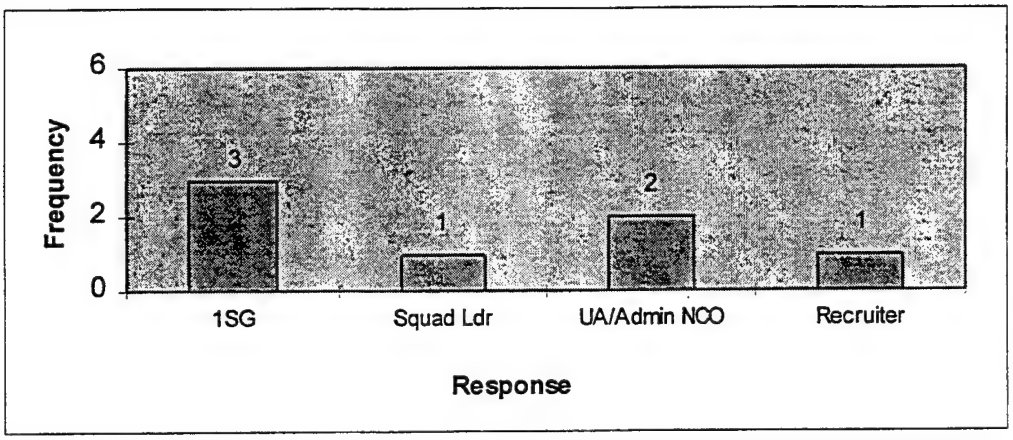

Figure 15. Frequency of 'who did you talk to in the chain of command' for reservists who exited during the encounter stage

The response frequency of the variable 'what did leadership do' revealed that the way leadership in the units handled the reservists was almost evenly distributed. For 2 of the 7 (29%) reservists, leadership took a specific action to rectify the problem. For example, the commander excused one of the reservist's unexcused absences. For another 2 (29%) reservists, leadership indicated that they would be transferred/discharged without a penalty. Still another 2 reservists reported that leadership did not do anything to resolve the dissatisfaction, and 1 reservist reported that leadership ignored his dissatisfaction, or "gave me the brush-off."

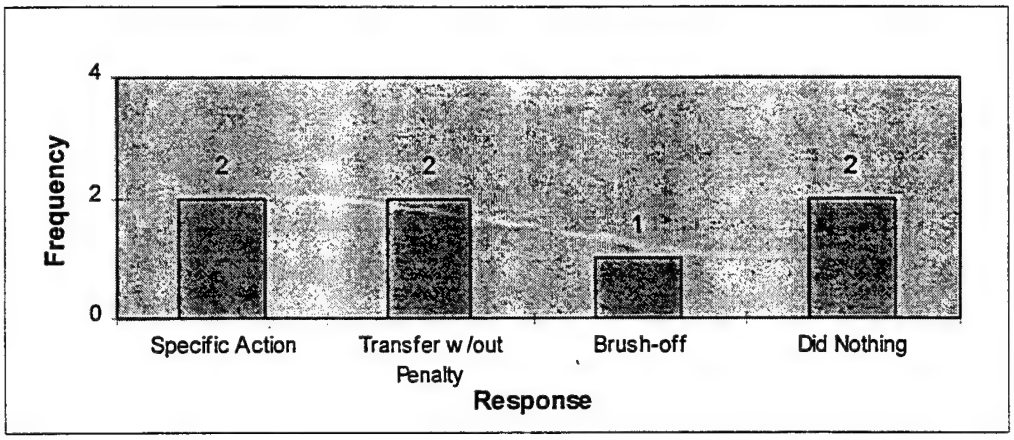

Figure 16. Frequency of 'what did the chain of command (COC) do' for reservists who exited during the encounter stage

D. METAMORPHOSIS

The encounter stage transitions to the metamorphosis stage after the reservist's first drill, and continues until the reservist is assimilated into the unit. The length of the metamorphosis stage differs for every reservist, and is a function of how well and how fast the reservist can revise his unmet expectations to conform to the norms and realities of the unit.

1. What is the nature of met and unmet expectations during the metamorphosis stage, and do unmet expectations relate to the reasons for exiting during this stage?

Similar to the organization of the encounter subsection, this section answers the same questions from the interview protocol in order to characterize met and unmet expectations in the metamorphosis stage.

7b(1) If something was better than you expected, what was better?

Of the 49 reservists who reported something was better than they expected, 13 of the 49

(29%) noticed something was better during the metamorphosis stage. As illustrated in Figure 17, the reservists in the metamorphosis stage noted the same things that the reservists in the encounter stage noted. Of the 13 reservists who noticed something was better during the metamorphosis stage, 2 (15%) reservists noticed the people were friendlier. One reservist reported that he was surprised by the great "esprit de corps" in his new unit. Two reservists noticed that the leadership was better, 2 reservists noticed other benefits/opportunities were better, and 2 reservists noticed the training was better than expected.

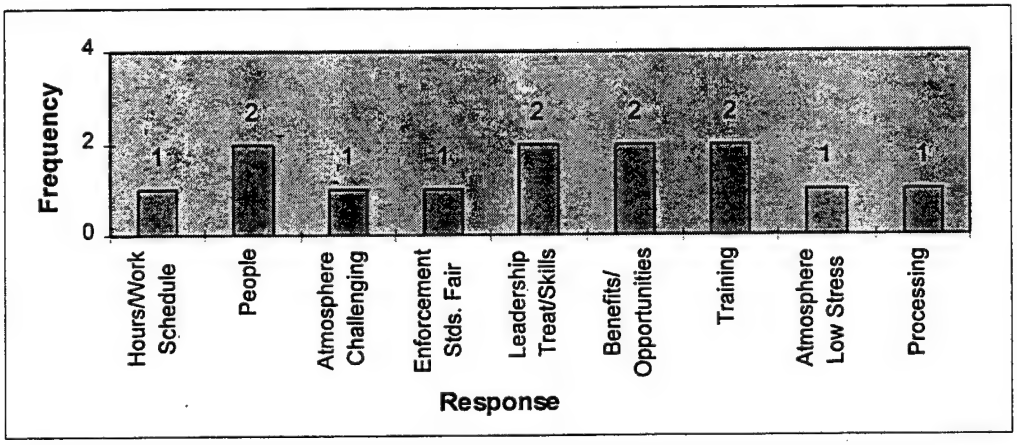

Figure 17. Frequency of 'what was better than expected' for reservists during the metamorphosis stage

7c(1) If something was worse than you expected, what was worse?

Of the 92 respondents who noticed something was worse than they expected, 34 reservists noticed something was worse than expected during the metamorphosis stage. As shown in Figure 18, 9 of the 34 (26%) reservists noticed the training was worse, 6 (18%) noticed the administrative processing in the unit was worse, and 5 (15%) noticed the leadership was worse. One reservist reported that he felt he was "just a number on a strength chart," and

that the leadership "didn't seem to care."

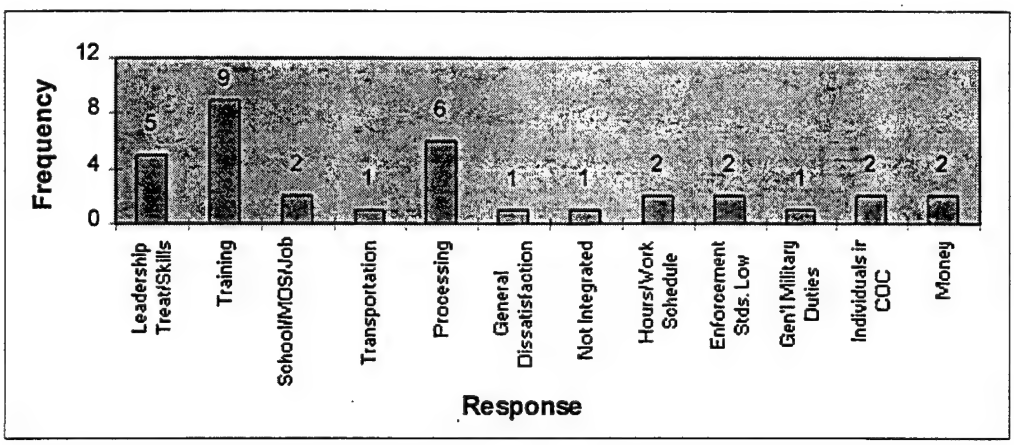

Figure 18. Frequency of 'what was worse than expected' for reservists during the metamorphosis stage

9a. What was your main reason for stopping?

As depicted in Figure 19, 85 reservists exited during the metamorphosis stage. Of the 85 reservists, 15 (18%) stopped participating because of poor training, 13 (15%) stopped participating due to a conflict with either a job or school, and 13 (15%) stopped participating due to poor leadership. A reservist reported that there was such a lack of leadership discipline in his unit that, "everyone called each other by their first names," and that the practice was acceptable in his unit.

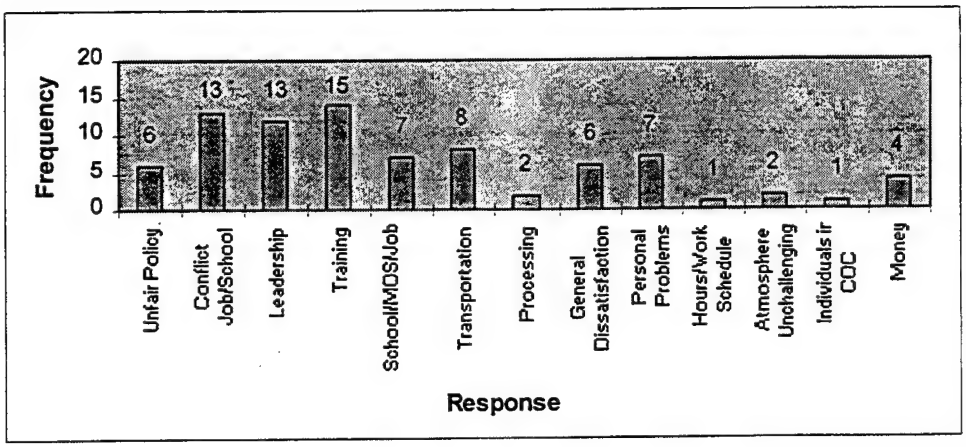

Figure 19. Frequency of 'why did you exit/stop participating during the metamorphosis stage

Just as in the encounter section, a cross tabulation of the variables 'what was worse than you expected' and 'why did you stop participating' provides insight as to whether unmet expectations relate to reasons reservists exit during the metamorphosis stage. Although 85 reservists exited during the metamorphosis stage, Figure 20 only illustrates the most relevant information from the cross tabulation. As depicted in the bold, italicized numbers in Figure 20, 36% (25 of 70) exited as a result of an unmet expectation.

Why Stop / What Worse	Unfair Policy	Conflict Job/School	Ldrshp	Tng	Not Given School/MOS	Trans	Processing	Gen'l Dissat.	Indiv. In COC	Money	Total
Ldrshp	1	2	7	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	15
Tng	2	3	2	4	2	1	1	1	0	1	17
Not Given School/MOS	1	0	0	1	3	1	0	0	0	0	6
Trans	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
Processing	0	1	1	2	1	0	1	0	0	1	7
Gen'l Dissat.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2
Hrs/Work Schedule	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Stds. Low	2	0	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	6
Indiv. In COC	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
Money	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2	4
Nothing Worse	0	1	0	0	1	2	0	1	0	0	5
Total	6	11	11	14	7	7	2	6	1	5	70

Figure 20. Cross tabulation of 'what was worse than expected' and 'why did you stop participating' for the metamorphosis stage

2. What attempts did reservists who left during the metamorphosis stage make to remedy dissatisfaction, and what actions did leadership take to resolve problems?

As discussed, 85 of the respondents left during the metamorphosis stage. A cross tabulation of the variables 'when did you stop' and 'did you talk to the chain of command about your dissatisfaction' revealed that 59 (69%) of the reservists talked to someone in the chain of command about their dissatisfaction, and 24 reservists did not. One soldier who talked to the first sergeant about his dissatisfaction said "he told me he'd talk to someone and get back to me—but he never did." Figure 21 identifies who in the chain of command the reservists talked to about their dissatisfaction. Of the 59 reservists who spoke to someone, 13 (22%) spoke to their platoon sergeant. One reservist who talked to his platoon sergeant, however, noted that "he agreed with me, but I don't think it went above him." Eleven (19%) reservists spoke to the first sergeant (1SG), and 10 (17%) spoke to the commander.

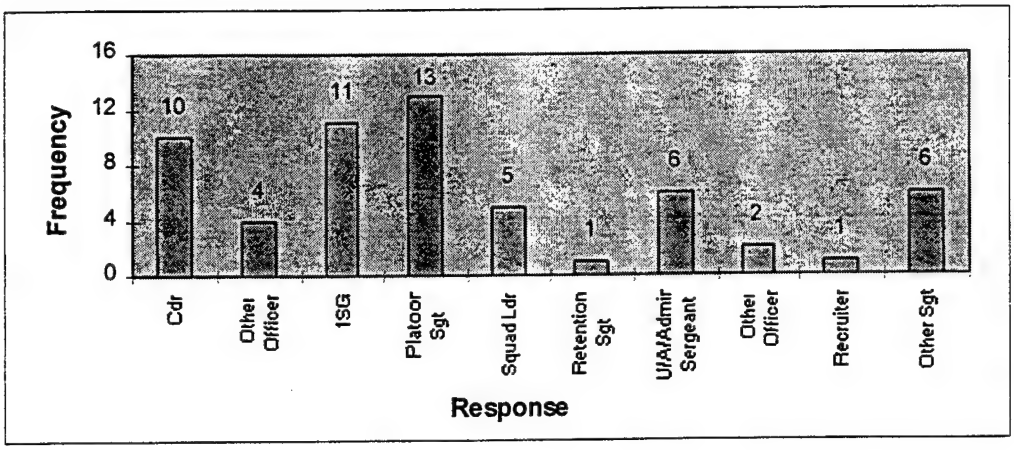

Figure 21. Frequency of 'who did you talk to' for reservists who exited during the metamorphosis stage

The response frequency of the variable 'what did leadership do' in Figure 22 revealed the manner in which leadership handled the reservists who left the unit. Of the 59 reservists who spoke to someone, 15 (25%) reported that the chain of command did nothing, while 12 (20%) reported that the chain of command said they would take a specific action to remedy the dissatisfaction. Seven reservists reported that the chain of command told them there was nothing they could do, and 4 reservists reported that the chain of command ignored them, or gave them the "brush-off."

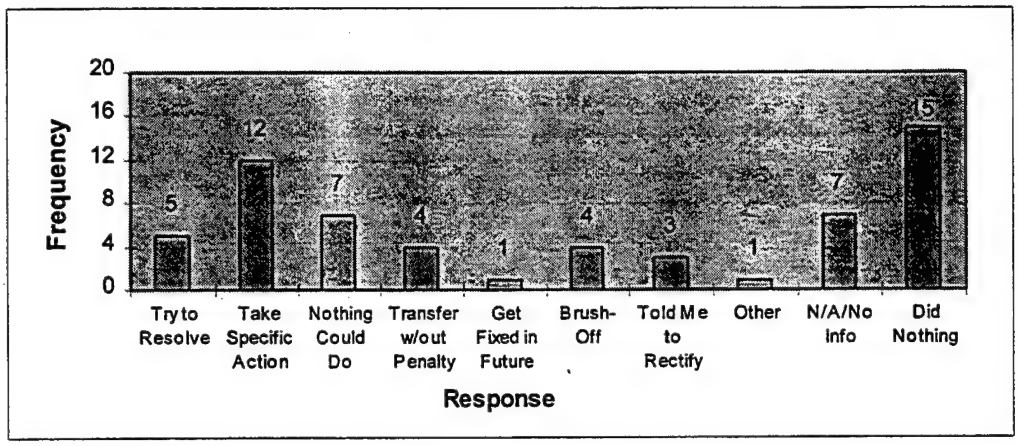

Figure 22. Frequency of 'what did the chain of command do' for reservists who exited during the metamorphosis stage

E. EXIT

When a reservist decides to stop participating in the unit, he has made a decision to exit the selected reserve system. Exiting is not a stage in the model, but is an outcome that usually results from dissatisfaction, and can occur in any stage of the model. This section provides information about the actions a unit usually takes after a reservist exits.

1. After the reservist exited the unit, did anyone personally contact him?

Answers to the following questions from the interview protocol will provide information to answer this question.

11a. After you stopped attending, did anyone personally try to get you to return?

A frequency distribution for this question showed that 41% of the reservists reported that someone did try to get them to return to the unit. Fifty-nine percent, however, reported that

no one attempted to get them to return. A reservist who was not personally contacted reported that the chain of command, "didn't even know I wasn't going—I guess they didn't even care." Another reservist who was only sent form letters advised leadership to "find out what the problem is and help the soldier resolve it—a letter just pisses the soldier off."

11b. Who tried to get you to return?

Figure 26 illustrates that of the 41 reservists that reported someone did try to get them to return, 10 of the 41 (24%), reported that their platoon sergeant was the one who contacted them. Similarly, 8 of the 41 (20%) respondents noted that another sergeant in the chain of command contacted them. In contrast, only 4 of the 41 (10%) reported that the commander contacted them, and only 1 of the 41 (2%) reported that another officer in their chain of command contacted them. Additionally, only 1 of the 41 (2%) reported contact by the unit retention sergeant.

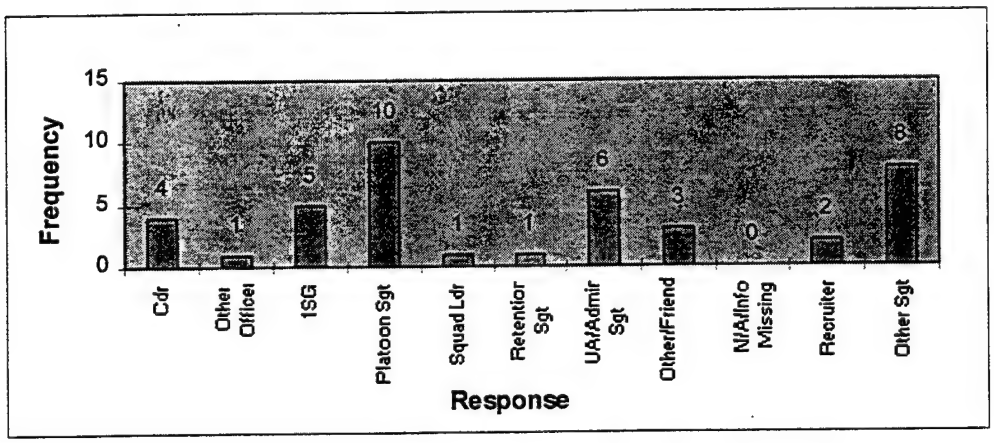

Figure 23. Frequency of 'who personally contacted you' after the reservist exited the unit.

11c. What did the person that contacted you say?

As illustrated in Figure 24, of the 41 reservists who were contacted by someone in their unit, 11 of the 41 (27%) noted that the person who contacted them inquired about their situation and the reasons they had missed drill. Twenty percent (8 of 41), however, reported that the individual only quoted the rules and regulations governing missed drills. In another 10 cases (24%), the contacting person either asked the reservist, or tried to convince them, to come back and participate in the unit.

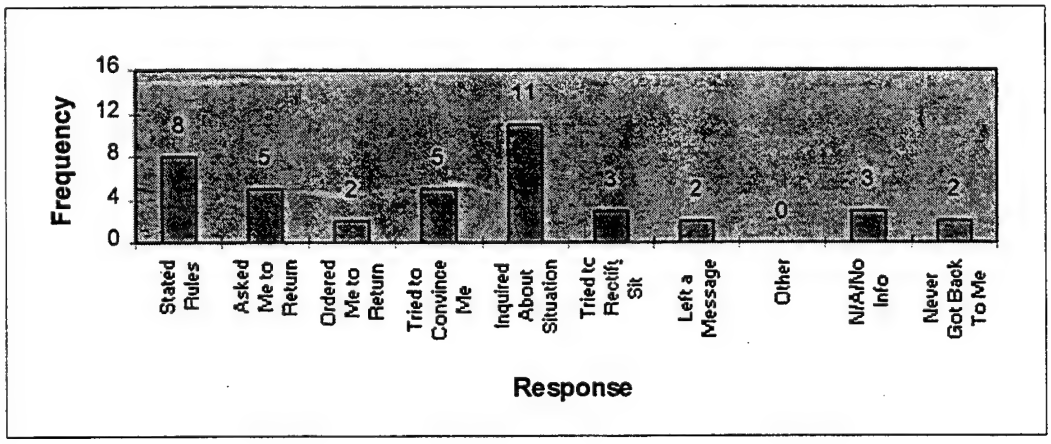

Figure 24. Frequency of 'what did the chain of command say' after contacting the reservist after he had left the unit

A cross tabulation of the variables 'who did you talk to' and 'what did they say' in Figure 25 provides more detailed information. Ironically, the individuals in the chain of command who have the authority to order a reservist to return to the unit (commander and first sergeant) did not do so. Generally, the lower the person was in the chain of command, the more likely the person was to just state the rules, or order the reservist to return.

Who Contacted / What Said	Cdr	Other Officer	ISG	Platoon Sgt	Squad Ldr	Retention NCO	U/A or Admin NCO	Other/ Friend	Recruiter	Other Sgt	Total
Stated Rules	0	1	0	3	0	0	2	0	0	2	8
Asked to Return	0	0	2	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	5
Ordered to Return	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2
Convinced to Return	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	5
Inquired About Sit.	0	0	1	4	0	1	1	1	0	3	11
Tried to Rectify Sit.	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	3
Left Message	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
N/A/No Info	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	3
Never Followed Up	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
Total	**4**	**1**	**5**	**10**	**1**	**1**	**6**	**3**	**2**	**8**	**41**

Figure 25. Cross tabulation of the variables 'who contacted you' and 'what did they say' for reservists who exited the unit

2. What would influence a soldier to rejoin a Reserve Unit, and is it related to the reason he exited?

The questions on the interview protocol that address this issue include:

13b. What, if anything, would get you to rejoin the Reserve?

Although 100 reservists responded, only the most frequent responses are depicted in Figure 26. Of the 100 respondents, 18 reported nothing would get them to rejoin. Another 8 reservists did not know, or were not sure what would get them to rejoin. Twelve reservists reported that they would rejoin if they could get a new job or a new MOS, and 7 reported they would rejoin if they could find a unit closer to home. Only 6 reservists reported they would rejoin if the pay increased. A reservist who would join if his pay increased expressed that he would work all week in his civilian job, and then "go to the Reserves for pocket change."

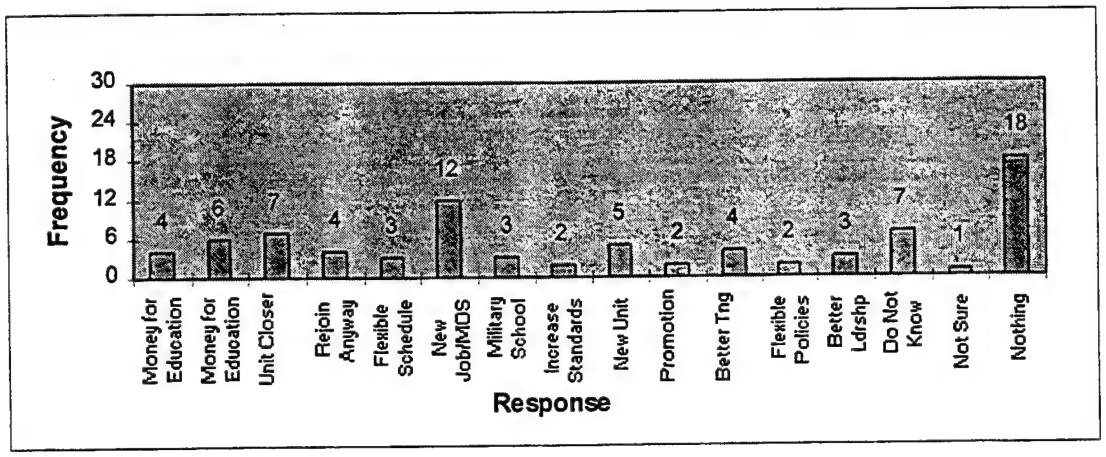

Figure 26. Frequency of 'what would it take to get you to rejoin the Reserve'

A cross tabulation of the variables 'what would it take to get you to rejoin' and 'why did you stop participating' provides information about whether 'what would influence a reservist to rejoin' is related to 'why he exited'. Figure 27 depicts the relevant information from the respondents. Of the 100 respondents, 70 named something that would get them to rejoin. As illustrated by the bold, italicized numbers in Figure 27, for 21% (15 of 70) of the reservists, the reason they exited the unit is directly related to the incentive they identified that would entice them to rejoin.

Why Stop / Why Rejoin	Unfair Policy	Conflict Job/School	Ldrshp	Tng	Not Given School/MOS	Trans	Gen'l Dissat.	Indiv. In COC	Money	Total
Money for Education	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	3
Money	0	3	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	6
Unit Closer	0	0	0	1	0	3	1	0	0	5
Would Rejoin Anyway	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
Flexible Schedule	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
New Job/MOS	0	1	0	5	4	0	1	0	0	11
Increase Standards	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
New unit	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	1	0	5
Better Training	2	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	4
Flexible Policies	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Better Leadership	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Do Not Know	0	2	2	0	0	2	1	0	0	7
Nothing	3	3	2	4	2	2	2	0	0	18
Total	7	14	9	15	6	8	7	1	3	70

Figure 27. Cross tabulation of the variables 'why did you stop participating' and 'what would it take to get you to rejoin the Reserve'

3. What recommendations do unsatisfactory participants have for Army Reserve leadership to reduce nonparticipation?

Figure 28, which only depicts most frequent responses, illustrates that of the 100 respondents, 22 reservists recommended increasing the quality of training in the unit. One reservist wondered, "what happens when the unit gets called to war and we haven't been training?" Seventeen reservists recommended increasing leadership's interest in and care of reservists. One reservist made a suggestion aimed at improving both leadership and training when he suggested that leadership "make soldiers feel like part of a team, and feel like they're really accomplishing something." Sixteen reservists recommended that the communications channels in the unit be improved. Additionally, the response frequencies for the question 'did the quality of communications influence your leaving' resulted in 75%

of reservists reporting that communications did influence, or somewhat

influence their decision to leave. Finally, 7 reservists recommended that new reservists should be informed of expectations before they report to the unit, and 4 more reservists recommended the unit do a better job of integrating new reservists into the unit. One reservist reported that "I just didn't ever feel like I was a member of the unit."

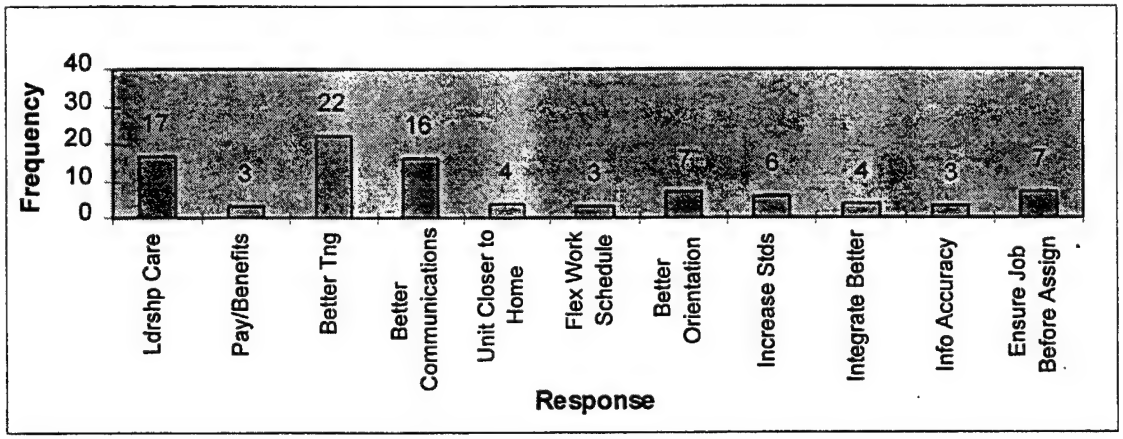

Figure 28. Frequency of 'what suggestion do you have to keep reservists participating in drills with their units'

DISCUSSION

The discussion includes implications and answers to the subsidiary research questions, and finally, the answer to the primary research question. The research questions are organized according to the integrated conceptual model presented in Figure 1. As mentioned previously, the reservists included in the sample are unsatisfactory participants who have failed to fulfill Reserve contract obligations. These reservists may have attribution biases which assign blame for their behavior to the institution or to others, rather than to themselves. Additionally, it should be recognized that some unsatisfactory participants may be poor performers, which may partially explain the low percentages of unit contact after the reservists exited the unit.

Subsidiary Research Questions

Anticipatory Socialization

a. What are the sources of information about the Army Reserve program, and are they accurate?

The primary sources of information about the Army Reserve program are local recruiters and in-service recruiters. More than half of the reservists whose source was an in-service recruiter received accurate information, and less than half of the reservists whose source was a local recruiter received accurate information. Part of this difference may be attributed to the fact that in-service recruiters access prior service soldiers, whereas most local recruiters access the majority of non-prior service soldiers. Prior service soldiers have

military experience, and thus may not need as much information about the Reserve in order to form realistic expectations. In addition, the local recruiter is rewarded for accessing reservists, and may portray the Reserve more positively than reality. The resulting overly optimistic view may result in potential recruits developing unrealistic expectations of the Reserve.

b. What are the sources of information about the Reserve unit, and are they accurate?

Over a third of reservists learned about their units from local recruiters. Although only a few reservists learned about their units from in-service recruiters, all reported the information was accurate, or somewhat accurate. As discussed, the accuracy of the in-service recruiters may result from the military experience of the prior service soldiers they recruit. In contrast, more than 10% of the reservists who learned about their unit from a local recruiter reported receiving inaccurate information. Additionally, almost a third of the reservists reported they received no prior information about their unit from any source. Recruiters and other accession sources, however, are not required to brief reservists about their units. Currently, the unit is the reservist's primary source of information through orientation briefings, etc. The reservist does not receive that information until he reports to the unit for the first time. The reservist has no opportunity to form realistic expectations of his unit, and may develop unrealistic expectations based on the generally optimistic information initially presented to persuade him to join the Reserve.

c. What is the role of the local recruiter in anticipatory socialization?

The role of the local recruiter in anticipatory socialization entails facilitating the new

reservist's encounter with his new unit by escorting the reservist to the unit for his first training weekend. Although the recruiter is not required to brief the reservist on the mission of the unit, the recruiter is required to escort the new reservist to his unit in accordance with the sponsorship program outlined in USARC Regulation 140-6. Over three-quarters of the respondents were accessed by a local recruiter, but only a little more than half were escorted by a local recruiter to their new unit. This figure is not surprising, as the recruiter could theoretically have to escort several reservists to different units on the same day. Escorting the reservist, however, demonstrates to the reservist that the organization cares about his first impressions of the unit.

Encounter

a. How well does the unit begin to integrate the reservist in the encounter stage?

Generally, the findings indicate room for improvement in the implementation of the sponsorship program. Although required by USARC Regulation 140-6, only approximately one-third of the reservists received an orientation briefing. Additionally, just over half of the reservists reported they received a sponsor. The assignment of a sponsor, however, is not a guarantee the sponsor performs his duties adequately. Almost a quarter of the reservists reported the sponsor did a poor job. On a positive note, commanders spoke to almost three-quarters of the newcomers, and almost all of the reservists were in-processed within the first two training weekends. The requirements of the sponsorship program are designed to assimilate the new reservist into the unit as quickly as possible. When these requirements are not accomplished, the reservist remains in the encounter stage longer than the first

training weekend, which slows the socialization process. As the length of the socialization time increases, the soldier is more likely to be dissatisfied, and is more likely to exit because he does not feel included in the unit.

b. What is the nature of met and unmet expectations during the encounter stage, and do unmet expectations relate to the reason for exiting during this stage?

Over half of the reservists experienced surprise (unmet expectations), both better and worse than expected, during the encounter stage. The significant number of unmet expectations indicates the reservist did not receive a realistic preview of the unit. This is not surprising, as most of the reservists received no information about the unit prior to their arrival.

The majority of reservists noticed the people in the unit were friendlier than they expected, followed by a much smaller number who noticed the leadership was better than they expected. Almost a third of the reservists, however, noticed the leadership was worse than they expected, followed by almost a quarter reporting the training was worse than expected. Generally, based on the data collected, reservists tended to first judge human interactions in the unit, rather than unit policies or standards.

Almost a third of the reservists identified something worse than they expected, and then exited for the same reason. These findings suggest that the reasons reservists exit during the encounter stage may be related to unmet expectations that have not been resolved. Leaders, then, should recognize that the first drill weekend is crucial to the socialization of the new reservist. If the first drill weekend is not properly managed, unmet expectations may form the basis for later decisions to exit the unit.

c. What attempts did reservists who left during the encounter stage make to remedy dissatisfaction, and what actions did leadership take?

Almost three-quarters of the reservists who left during the encounter stage talked to someone about their dissatisfaction. This finding indicates the reservists signaled someone of their dissatisfaction. These signals allow leadership the opportunity to identify a dissatisfied reservist and take actions to prevent a reservist from exiting.

Almost half of the reservists spoke to the first sergeant. The first sergeant, then, has the most opportunity to identify the dissatisfaction and, if possible, take measures to prevent a soldier from eventually exiting the unit. None of the reservists spoke to the commander. Lack of involvement may indicate to the reservist that the commander is not interested enough in the reservist's activities to schedule time to talk to him.

Almost a third of the soldiers spoke to the unit administrator, or the administrative sergeant. Ironically, these individuals are not in the formal chain of command. These individuals should refer the reservist back to his formal chain of command, as they have no leadership obligation to assist the reservist with problems.

While the reservist is being in-processed during the encounter stage, the platoon sergeant may not spend much time with him. The platoon sergeant should periodically "check-in" with the reservist to make sure the sponsor is taking care of him, and that there are no problems. The platoon sergeant should also ensure the reservist knows the procedures to communicate with the chain of command.

Almost half of the reservists perceived the chain of command ignored them, or did nothing to resolve their problems. Leadership, then, must take actions to change this

perception and be more receptive to dissatisfied reservists. Leadership needs to demonstrate they care and will do what they can to resolve reservists' problems.

Finally, none of the reservists spoke to the retention sergeant, whose duties include the retention of reservists. Leadership may want to redefine the role of the retention sergeant to help in the identification of reservists at risk of exiting the unit.

Metamorphosis

a. What is the nature of met and unmet expectations during the metamorphosis stage, and do unmet expectations relate to the reasons for exiting during this stage?

Fewer reservists in the metamorphosis stage, as compared to the encounter stage, noticed something was better or worse than they expected. This finding suggests that based on the model, some reservists were able to successfully revise some of their unmet expectations during the metamorphosis stage. As in the encounter stage, reservists primarily noticed the human interaction processes in the unit, such as the people, the leadership and the training. In addition, the reservists identified problems that were not as evident in the encounter stage. Almost 20% noticed that processing was worse than they expected. Whereas leadership can generally assume the majority of the dissatisfaction can be attributed to leadership and training issues during the encounter stage, more long-term issues, such as policies and procedures, evolve as potential problems during the metamorphosis stage.

The majority of the unsatisfactory participants left during the metamorphosis stage. Over time, these reservists could not resolve their dissatisfactions and exited the unit. Approximately one third of the reservists identified something as worse than they expected,

and exited because of the same unresolved dissatisfaction. Again, leadership must stress the importance of accepting and integrating the reservist, and must attempt to identify and resolve problems as early in the socialization process as possible.

b. What attempts did reservists who left during the metamorphosis stage make to remedy dissatisfaction, and what actions did leadership take to resolve problems?

Almost three-quarters of the reservists talked to someone in the chain of command about their dissatisfactions. During the metamorphosis stage, however, the majority of the reservists talked to their platoon sergeant about their problems. Many still spoke to the first sergeant, but again, unlike the encounter stage, several spoke to the commander. The first sergeant consistently remains involved in the problem resolution process and potentially has the most influence on a reservist's decision to exit. Now, however, the platoon sergeant and the commander are significantly involved as well. Both the commander and the platoon sergeant need to be involved in problem resolution earlier in the socialization process—during the encounter stage. These findings suggest that the reservist has developed a better understanding of the communications process in the unit, and knows how to utilize the chain of command to solve problems. Again, leaders should ensure reservists understand the communication channels and the chain of command structure during the encounter stage.

Over half of the reservists reported the individuals they talked to about their dissatisfaction did nothing to resolve the problem, or ignored them. Additionally, almost a third of the reservists did not speak to anyone about their dissatisfaction. This finding suggests that reservists may have perceived the chain of command as being unapproachable, or perceived that the chain of command could not, or would not, resolve the problem.

Leaders definitely need to keep the lines of communication open with reservists in the unit, and perhaps learn and practice counseling skills.

Exit

a. After the reservist exited the unit, did anyone personally contact him?

Almost 60% of the reservists were not personally contacted by anyone in the unit. The majority of reservists who were contacted were contacted by their platoon sergeant. A reservist who has exited should be contacted by every individual in his chain of command. Many were contacted by the unit administrator/administrative sergeant, or another sergeant in the unit, and told the rules governing nonparticipation or ordered to return to the unit. This finding suggests that reservists are being contacted by sergeants who are tasked to contact them, rather than someone in their chain of command who should care that the reservist does not want to participate in the unit.

Although the first sergeant seems to have opportunities in the encounter and metamorphosis stages to influence the reservist, few reservists were personally contacted by the first sergeant after they exited the unit. Additionally, few were personally contacted by the commander. The commander and the first sergeant are missing an opportunity to influence the reservist to return to the unit. The commander and first sergeant are figureheads, and a call from either one demonstrates they care about the reservist's decision to exit, and want him to return.

b. What would influence a reservist to rejoin a Reserve unit, and is it related to the reason he exited?

Over 80% of reservists might be influenced to rejoin a Reserve unit. The findings

show major influences include a new job or a new MOS, a unit closer to home, and increased pay. Additionally, the results indicate that for almost a quarter of the reservists, the reason they would rejoin the Reserve is directly related to the reason they exited the unit. For example, some reservists stated they exited because they did not receive the school/MOS/job they desired, and would rejoin if they were given a military school, or a new MOS/job. The majority of the unsatisfactory participants have already completed initial entry training, and are MOS qualified. If the Reserve could accommodate some of these soldiers, training and recruiting dollars could be saved by keeping the soldier in the Reserve system. For example, attempting to place a reservist in a unit closer to his home, if possible, would save cost of recruiting and training another reservist.

c. What recommendations do reservists have for Army Reserve leadership to reduce nonparticipation?

Reservists' top three recommendations to reduce nonparticipation include improving the quality of training, improving the quality of leadership, and improving the quality of communications in the unit. Poor training is one of the trends which consistently emerged throughout the interview process. The findings indicate that, although a reservist may be getting paid for attending drill, he values his time and wants to learn. Developing an incentive program for good training, and placing a list of training "best practices" on a web page, for example, may help leadership benefit from other unit's training successes.

The second trend which consistently emerged is poor leadership. The results indicate that many unsatisfactory participants perceived leadership treated them unfairly, and did not care about their dissatisfaction. This finding reinforces the third recommendation—that

communications be improved. Improving communications in the unit may improve reservist's perceptions of the leadership. Managerial communications modules and counseling modules should be included in leadership training

Primary Research Question

What factors influence reservists to stop participating in Selected Reserve unit drills?

As discussed, many factors influence reservists to stop participating in unit drills. The findings indicate, however, that the most influential factors are training and leadership. Reservists identified unmet expectations in training and leadership in the encounter and metamorphosis stages of socialization, and many exited because of training and leadership issues. Unit leadership exacerbated these problems through little or ineffective attempts to rectify the reservist's problems, as well as inadequate efforts to influence the reservist to return to the unit.

CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions are presented based on the discussion in the previous section.

1. The local recruiter is the reservist's primary source of information about the Reserve Program, however, one-third of the information reservists receive from local recruiters is inaccurate.

2. One in three reservists received no prior information about their assigned unit.

3. A recruiter did not escort one in three reservists to his assigned unit.

4. Although required by the sponsorship program, approximately one in four reservists did not receive an orientation brief, did not meet with the commander, and was not assigned a sponsor.

5. Reservists generally noticed the people in the unit were friendlier than they expected, and the training and leadership were worse than they expected.

6. Poor training was the leading reason one in four reservists exited the unit.

7. The unit first sergeant is the primary member of the chain of command the reservist speaks to about his dissatisfaction before exiting the unit.

8. The chain of command failed to resolve problems for one in four reservists.

9. The chain of command personally contacted only half of the reservists

who had exited the unit.

10. If offered various incentives, 82% of the unsatisfactory participants would rejoin the Army Reserve.

11. The leading recommendations non-participants have to increase participation in units is increasing the quality of training, leadership, and communications.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Provide new reservists realistic and accurate information during the accession process.

This study highlights the fact that retention begins during the recruiting process. Providing new reservists accurate information and realistic job previews will enable them to form realistic expectations of the Reserve, and of the unit. Realistic information may reduce the number of unmet expectations, which may reduce dissatisfaction and prevent reservists from exiting the unit.

a. Enable accession sources to provide realistic job previews so new reservists develop realistic expectations. Instead of showing training videos which depict training that is the exception rather than the norm, produce training tapes that depict a typical drill weekend for an average Reserve unit. Produce a training video that follows some new reservists through the in-processing and integration process.

b. Provide accession sources (in-service recruiters, local recruiters and MEPS) standardized fact sheets about the Reserve and specific units that can be provided to the new reservist. Reserve fact sheets may include the mission, wiring diagram, commander's philosophy and goals, etc.

c. Eventually enable all units to have web pages on the Internet so accession sources can easily provide new reservists current information about the unit. The accession sources could have a computer terminal and modem with access to the Internet, and could

allow new recruits to view unit homepages, as well as print a hardcopy of the information.

2. Have a unit representative escort the new unit member from the accession source.

Currently, the recruiter is required to escort the new reservist to the unit. The findings suggest, however, that the reservist is not always escorted to the unit. Often, the recruiter is unable to escort the new reservists he is responsible for to their units due to scheduling conflicts. Having a unit representative, possibly the retention sergeant and the designated unit sponsor, report to the recruiting station and escort the new reservist will ensure the new member is escorted to the unit. Additionally, the unit should expect, and be prepared for the new reservist's arrival.

3. Develop a unit arrival schedule for new reservists.

The findings suggest that at times, coordination between the unit and the recruiter does not occur, and the unit is not expecting the arrival of the new reservist. One recommendation is to study the feasibility of only accepting newcomers every other month. A standardized arrival every other month would allow commanders to plan training around the arrival of new reservists, as well as enable them to plan and execute the requirements of the sponsorship program (plan and conduct orientation briefings and the commander's talk to newcomers, select and train unit sponsors, etc.).

For example, the recruiter would develop a pick-up schedule for each Reserve unit which corresponded to the unit's drill dates, and a unit representative would report to the recruiting station at the designated time every other month to meet and escort newcomers

assigned to their unit. With a standardized arrival, the chain of command would be available and prepared to execute the requirements of the sponsorship program. This procedure would prevent uncoordinated arrivals and sponsorship program failures, which occurred when one reservist reported to his unit on a day the unit was conducting an M16 qualification.

4. Emphasize the importance of the sponsorship program in leadership training.

Leadership training should include the requirements of the sponsorship program, and the associated cost and readiness implications of failing to implement the program successfully. The training may include a general overview of the stages of socialization and expectation theory, as well as the results of this study. The training may also include role-playing to demonstrate to leaders the importance of successfully assimilating a new reservist into the unit. In particular, the results indicate that it is essential that the new reservists be kept busy and well attended to during their first two drill weekends.

5. The unit retention sergeant's duties should include the entire scope of the retention process, and not just re-enlistment duties.

Currently, the retention sergeant is primarily tasked with re-enlistment issues. In addition to the chain of command's efforts to contact the reservist, the retention sergeant should have a major role in assisting the commander to identify reservists who are at risk of exiting the unit. For instance, after a reservist's fifth unexcused absence, the retention sergeant should contact the reservist and try to determine the reasons the reservist is not attending drills. The retention sergeant would then inform the commander about the reservist's dissatisfaction. If the commander determines the reservist has a problem, such

as transportation, that he cannot resolve, the retention NCO should seek a way to keep the reservist as a total force asset, by placing him in another unit or reserve component. The commander, however, must first exhaust all local resources to assist the reservist, and should only refer those reservists who have a legitimate issue, have a good performance record, and are worth retaining. This suggestion also includes the need to create a reward system to recognize a "save" to DoD drill strength to offset the current penalty of a loss to the unit.. It also recognizes the need to free up more time for the retention NCO (e.g. her only duty on drills).

6. Emphasize the importance of communication in leadership training

Managerial communications and counseling modules should be included in leadership training. The perceptions that leadership was unorganized or uncaring could be mitigated if the chain of command ensured the channels of communication were open—up, down, and laterally. Leadership should keep reservists informed to reduce the stress and frustration associated with not knowing what is going on. Counseling training would provide leadership the ability to be effective and empathetic listeners, and teach them skills to demonstrate caring.

7. Publicize and reward unit "best practices."

Recruiting Partnership Councils are scheduled at different levels in the chain of command of the USAR. These councils could be used as a forum to highlight and reward unit "best practices," including leadership, training, and sponsorship initiatives. For example, the units may be awarded extra funds to purchase training teams and modules from the Readiness Training Center. Additionally, the "best practices" could be published on a

web page, similar to the way lessons learned are published by the Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL).

8. All reserve components should share IRR data and use this as a recruiting tool, as 75% of the unsatisfactory participants said they would rejoin a unit if certain dissatisfactions were alleviated.

An unsatisfactory participant represents a loss of training dollars to the Reserve. Sharing a database of unsatisfactory participants would allow either the Reserve or the National Guard to fill shortages with individuals who may have completed initial entry training, or are MOS qualified. For example, if a reservist does not like the Reserve, and will not rejoin the Reserve, he may be willing to join the National Guard, as some reservists indicated during the course of the interview. If the database resulted in a successful rejoin, perhaps the National Guard could pay the Reserve for the accession of the Army Reserve unsatisfactory participant, and vice-versa, as an incentive to share information. The Reserve components could potentially recoup some of the money invested in training an individual.

Continuation of the Study

This study focused on the factors which influenced 100 reservists to exit a unit via unsatisfactory participation. A future study will compare experiences of those unsatisfactory participants with experiences of 100 satisfactory participants, based on the integrated model.

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APPENDIX 1

ARMY RESERVE UNSATISFACTORY PARTICIPATION INTERVIEW

My name is _____. I'm at a graduate school of management. We've been asked by the Army Reserve to talk to some reservists who stopped participating to find out the reasons, and what can be done to reduce nonparticipation. Could you take a few minutes to talk confidentially to me about your experiences?

BACKGROUND

1. a. Survey identification number

   b. Sex

   c. Last reserve unit

   c. MOS in your last Reserve unit?

   d. How many other Reserve units have you been a member of?

   e. MOS in the other Reserve units

   f. Active duty

   g. Last active duty unit

   h. MOS on active duty

   i. Time on active duty

   j. Time between joining and attending Reserve Initial Entry Training

   k. Current Rank

   l. Marital status

   m. Children

   n. Current age

   o. Distance from home to last Reserve unit (in minutes)

   p(a). Distance from home to last Reserve unit (in miles)

   p. Civilian occupation

q. Highest level of education

PRE-ENTRY

2. a. Where did you learn about the Army Reserve Program?
   b. How accurate was that information?
   c. What was different than reality?
3. a. Where did you learn about your unit?
   b. How accurate was that information?
   c. What was different than reality?
4. Did your recruiter:
   a. Take you to the unit?
   b. Tell you about the unit's mission?
   c. Give you the MOS you wanted?
   c(1). If not, why not?
   d. Tell the unit you were coming?
5. a. Why did you join the Army Reserve?
   b. Were your expectations met?
   b(1). If not, why not?

ENCOUNTER

6. On your first training weekend:
   a. Was the unit expecting you?
   b. Did you get an orientation brief?
   c. Did the commander talk to newcomers?
   d. Did they appoint a sponsor to help you?
   d(1). If so, did the sponsor do a good job?
   e. Did you get in-processed (pay, identification card, uniform)?

METAMORPHOSIS

7. a. After you joined the unit, did things go as you expected?

b. Was anything better than what you expected?

b(1). If so, what was better than you expected?

b(2). When did you notice?

c. Was anything worse than what you expected?

c(1). If so, what was better than you expected?

c(2). When did you notice?

8. When did you stop attending drills?

9. a. What was your main reason for stopping attendance at drills?

b(1) Was there a second reason you stopped attending?

b(2) Was there a third reason you stopped attending?

10. a. Did you talk about your dissatisfaction with anyone in the chain of command?

b. If so, who did you talk to?

c. What did the person you talked to do about your dissatisfaction?

EXIT

11. a. After you stopped attending, did anyone personally try to get you to return?

b. If so, who?

c. What did the person who contacted you say?

d. Why didn't you return?

12. I'm going to ask you a couple of questions about the quality of communication in your unit. On a scale of one to five, with one being very dissatisfied, and five being very satisfied, how satisfied were you with communications with:

a. Your co-workers?

b. Your sergeants?

c. Your commander?

d. How could communications be improved in the unit?

13. a. Do you plan to ever rejoin an Army Reserve unit?

a(1). If you have rejoined, why did you rejoin?

b. What, if anything, would get you to rejoin a unit?

c. What, if anything, do you miss about your unit?

d. What, if anything, don't you miss about your unit?

Finally, if you could offer one suggestion to the Army Reserve leadership to keep soldiers participating in drills with their units, what would it be?

Thanks for your time. Your comments have been very useful.

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George W. Thomas, Code SM/Te 2
Department of Systems Management
Naval Postgraduate School
555 Dyer Rd Rm 333 Bldg 330
Monterey, CA 93943-5103

Kathryn M. Kocher, Code SM/Ko 1
Department of Systems Management
Naval Postgraduate School
555 Dyer Rd Rm 372 Bldg 330
Monterey, CA 93943-5103

Bob Barrios-Choplin, Code SM/Bc 3
Department of Systems Management
Naval Postgraduate School
555 Dyer Rd Rm 239 Bldg 330
Monterey, CA 93943-5103

COL B.J. Thornburg..... 2
5 Pritchard Court
Stafford, VA 22554